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## SOME FACTS OF LATIN WORD-ORDER<sup>1</sup>

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The one part of our grammars which seems not to be built on collections of ascertained facts is that which deals with word-order. The facts to be presented in this paper have to do with certain details rather than with the larger questions of word-order; yet before presenting those facts I must for two reasons venture an opinion on some of the larger questions. In the first place, I wish to present the facts, not merely as valuable in themselves, but as evidence that the whole subject of word-order needs and will repay a thorough study. How can we trust the grammars when they lay down the larger principles if they do not state correctly the details on which the larger principles should be based? In the second place, some of the facts which I shall present are so bound up with the larger principles that I cannot discuss the facts without expressing an opinion on the larger matters.

Most of our grammars tell us that the subject normally stands first. How do they know? A partial count in Caesar seems to show that about half of his subjects do not stand first; and apparently less than half of Cicero's stand first. Our English order requires the subject to stand first, and I believe that "normally" means only that the English writer is carrying over his preconceived English feeling into Latin grammar. I do not believe that Caesar and Cicero knew that the subject should stand first. The rule may be the best that we can do for pupils who are asked to translate into Latin wholly detached sentences from a composition book; but I believe that Caesar and Cicero, if requested to translate the same sentences, would ask what came before them. Neither Caesar nor Cicero has left us a single completely detached sentence; that is, a sentence not connected with some other

<sup>1</sup> Read at the fourteenth annual meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South.

thought already expressed or in his mind. Therefore we cannot find out how they would have written such sentences. What we can do is to ascertain the principles which led them to put all words first in their sentences, and see whether or not those principles adequately explain the position of such words as happen to be subjects. So far as I can see, they do.

The grammars tell us that this supposed normal order, by which the subject stands first, is broken into by the "rhetorical order," by which the emphatic word stands first; as if emphasis were the one rhetorical goal to be aimed at. Some of them improve on this statement by saying that the first and last places are emphatic. So far as I have observed, the evidence for these views consists of selections of examples in which the emphatic words do come first and last. It remains for someone to apply the *reductio ad absurdum* by selecting examples to prove that the interior of the sentence is the emphatic place; and this can be done by one who has the time. Two grammars even go so far as to say that the great principle of word-order is that the words were arranged in the order of their emphasis—with the most emphatic first, the next emphatic next, and so on down the sentence; as if any human being had ever talked in that fashion.

But, in fact, if one will check off with pencil and paper all the sentences in a few pages of Caesar, not merely the striking sentences, he will find that the great majority begin with whatever word links the thought of the sentence with that of the preceding sentence, whether the linking word is subject or ablative or verb, whether it is emphatic or not. But when the thread of the narrative is broken, as, for example, by turning to the actions of the enemy, the reader will find the new actor or topic put first to warn us of the break. And again it makes no difference whether the word be nominative, ablative, or verb. In reading such a sentence we do indeed emphasize the leading word; but it is put first to warn us of the break, not in accordance with an imaginary principle that all emphatic words are put first. These two principles will be found to account for the position of nearly all of Caesar's initial words. Occasionally in Caesar and very often in Cicero's speeches emotion, genuine or calculated, leads to the apparent blurting out first of

the important word in violation of the principles just stated; and we may then say fairly that the word is "put first for emphasis."

I do not mean to imply that I think those statements fully cover the ground, or that I think myself able to cover it. Some day someone will read appreciatively Henri Weil's *Order of Words*, will find in Mendel's *Sentence Connection* a suggestive analysis of the relations of sentences and a partial support of Weil's views, and will seriously study the facts of Latin word-order. I think that he will demonstrate that the great principle of word-order is to make the order show the relation of each sentence to its context, and will point out in detail how it is done. In the meantime, unless we note the linking and breaking orders of which I have spoken, we miss the chief clues to the connection of sentences and the chief beauty of Latin word-order, and we fail to estimate properly the genuine occasions when words are "put first for emphasis."

I may add that whoever makes a serious study of word-order will be obliged to take into account the laws of prose rhythm. Even if the details of word-order had been studied thoroughly in the past, what is now known of prose rhythm would necessitate a restudy of the material.

But this paper has no such ambitious scope as I have outlined. It merely presents certain facts about which the grammars disagree or are in error. I did not collect these facts myself. They were collected by three graduate students whom I shall name at the proper places. In no case were the statistics verified by a second reading of the authors studied, so that there may be minor errors. But all the students were capable and accurate, all spent much time on the work, and I watched their progress closely enough to feel sure that their results are substantially accurate. Moreover I have had parts of their results verified by other students.

#### I. THE POSITION OF ADJECTIVES AND OTHER MODIFIERS OF NOUNS

I read in two grammars that the adjective more often precedes its noun, in another that attributes, unless emphatic, follow their substantives, in two others that adjectives normally follow, though

adjectives of quantity and some others precede, and in another that whichever is more emphatic precedes. It is strange that grammars do not agree on this simplest, most obvious, most easily ascertained point. That statement which distinguishes between adjectives of quantity and other adjectives implies an exact knowledge of facts, is made by the two most recent grammars, has been accepted by certain beginners' books, and, I suppose, is the prevalent opinion. Yet for Caesar, Cicero, and some other authors it is a mistake. And even those grammars which correctly say that adjectives usually precede drop into errors when they descend to details.

In the *Classical Journal* for June, 1913, Miss Elizabeth F. Smiley presented some figures which surprised me at the time. She showed that in the equivalent of four books of Caesar 82.35 per cent of all nouns modified by adjectives or pronouns follow their modifiers. She convinced me that teachers of Caesar ought to teach that adjectives usually precede their nouns. But when I said so to an eminent grammarian he pointed out that Miss Smiley had not classified her adjectives, and maintained that if she had done so she would have found all but adjectives of quantity and some other specific classes usually following. Thereupon I suggested to Miss Mabel Merryman that she take as the subject of her Master's thesis the position of all attributive modifiers of nouns in one or more Latin authors. She studied their position in the entire seven books of Caesar's *Gallic War* and in seven speeches of Cicero—the four against Catiline, the Manilian Law, the Archias, and the Marcellus. Table I (p. 648) gives the most important results of her work. Her statistics do not settle the matter for the whole of Latin, but they do settle what the high-school teacher ought to teach. They take into account neither the frequent separation of the adjective from its noun nor the effect of the rhythmical clausulae.

Notice in the first place that Miss Merryman's results bear out Miss Smiley's. Omitting the participles, as Miss Smiley seems to have done, Miss Merryman found that 80.67 per cent of all adjectives and pronouns in seven books precede their nouns; while Miss Smiley found that 82.35 per cent of all modified nouns in

four books follow their modifiers. In the seven speeches of Cicero, which Miss Smiley did not study, 68.52 per cent of all adjectives and

TABLE I  
POSITION OF ATTRIBUTIVE MODIFIERS OF NOUNS

MODIFIERS	CAESAR, B.G., i-vii		CICERO, 7 SPEECHES	
	Precede	Follow	Precede	Follow
<b>Adjectives:</b>				
Quantity, size.....	1,048	99	435	89
Relative position.....	291	35	88	13
Time.....	70	3	39	8
Cardinals.....	216	187	66	7
Ordinals.....	99	37	7	6
Distributives.....	33	3	2	0
<i>alius, alter, ullus, nullus</i> .....	125	10	75	6
Proper adjectives.....	40	22	16	25
Miscellaneous.....	375	157	378	232
Totals.....	2,297	553	1,106	386
Stereotyped phrases.....	20	151	1	269
Totals.....	2,317	704	1,107	655
<b>Pronominal Adjectives:</b>				
Possessive.....	238	111	231	181
Demonstrative.....	640	4	486	28
<i>ipse</i> .....	29	3	26	32
Relative.....	123	0	39	0
Interrogative.....	51	0	57	0
Indefinite.....	61	7	46	19
Totals.....	1,142	125	885	260
Attributive Participles.....	68	300	30	148
Genitive, Miscellaneous*	695	977	406	521
<b>Phrases:</b>				
Adjective, noun, genitive.....	163	.....	61	.....
Adjective, genitive, noun.....	124	.....	61	.....
Genitive, adjective, noun.....	14	.....	8	.....
Monosyllabic preposition, adjective, noun.....	624	.....	.....	.....
Adjective, preposition, noun.....	118	.....	39 to 319 of the other two orders	.....
Preposition, noun, adjective.....	94	.....	.....	.....

\* Excluding genitives of demonstrative and relative pronouns, which more often precede, genitive with *causa*, which always precedes, and stereotyped phrases, which usually follow.

pronouns precede. If Cicero had not been so fond of *res publica* and *di immortales* the percentage would have been considerably greater.

Everyone knows that pronouns usually precede, in the mass; and stereotyped combinations like *res publica* are well recognized.

If we omit these and consider only the first totals in the table, 80.31 per cent of Caesar's adjectives precede, and 74.13 per cent of Cicero's; i.e., four out of five adjectives in Caesar, three out of four in Cicero, stand in the English order.

But Miss Smiley did not classify her adjectives, and thus left a loophole for those who maintain that all but certain kinds of adjectives normally follow. Miss Merryman tried every classification that seemed worth while. The classes given in the table are the most important. It will be seen that adjectives and pronouns of virtually every class more often precede their nouns. Some are more likely to precede than others; but, classify as you will, there is no remnant that usually follows. The group called "miscellaneous" in the table is the remnant left after deducting all the preceding classes and, of course, the stereotyped phrases.

It should be added that Miss Merryman's thesis does not merely give the totals for the classes which appear in the table. For most classes she gives the figures for each word. I do not think that the totals conceal any word which more often follows. For example, not only indefinites as a class, but every individual indefinite more often precedes. Some grammars say that *quidam* follows; but it precedes 6 times in Caesar, follows twice; precedes 23 times in Cicero, follows 6 times.

To the general statement that adjectives and pronouns more often precede their nouns there are only three exceptions, and they are apparent rather than real.

1. In most of the stereotyped phrases, like *res publica*, the adjective follows. But these do not form a class by either meaning or form. They are virtually compound nouns. Those included here are: *aes alienum, civis Romanus, consul designatus, di immortales, latus apertum, navis longa, ora maritima, pontifex maximus, patres conscripti, populus Romanus, res familiaris, res frumentaria, res militaris, res publica, se suaque omnia, dextrum cornu, nova res, novissimum agmen, sinistrum cornu*.

2. Proper adjectives more often follow in Cicero. But this includes chiefly such combinations as *Plato Atheniensis*, where one might fairly call *Atheniensis* an appositive noun.

3. *Ipse* more often follows in Cicero. But this is because such combinations as *ea ipsa* are included, though no one can say which word is substantive, which adjective. Cicero, like Caesar, preferred *ipse Alexander* to *Alexander ipse*, though his preference is not as strong.

Miss Merryman found that attributive participles more often follow, no doubt because of their verbal nature. I believe that the grammars do not mention this fact and I feel justified in excluding them from the discussion of adjectives.

To test the validity of these results elsewhere in Latin, Miss Merryman studied two books of the *Aeneid* and Miss Mignonette Spilman studied Livy xxi, *De senectute*, and the *Captives* of Plautus. In the *Aeneid* adjectives and pronouns of every single class more often precede. The same is true of the other works mentioned, with the following exceptions:

1. Proper adjectives more often follow in the *De senectute* for the same reason as in the speeches of Cicero, but they more often precede in Livy.

2. Possessives more often follow in the *De senectute* and in Livy, but they more often precede in the *Captives*.

3. *Ipse* more often follows in the *De senectute* for the same reason as in the speeches of Cicero, but it more often precedes in Livy, and is evenly balanced in the *Captives*.

4. Miscellaneous adjectives more often follow in the *Captives*, only 42 per cent of them preceding; but 61 per cent of them precede in the *De senectute* and 67 per cent in Livy.

Attributive genitives are more evenly balanced. Of the total number both Caesar and Cicero make a small majority precede. But the genitive with *causa* always precedes; so do the genitives of the interrogative and relative pronouns. The genitive of other pronouns usually precedes, just as pronominal adjectives do. On the other hand, in most stereotyped phrases, like *milia passuum* and *tribunus militum*, the genitive follows. Excluding these classes the genitive more often follows in both authors—about 58 per cent following in Caesar, 56 per cent in Cicero. Similar results were obtained in the study of the *De senectute*, the *Captives*, and the parts of Vergil and Livy that were read.

Doubtless many of us have been misled by the statement made in three grammars and in several composition books that when a noun is modified by both an adjective and a genitive the usual order is adjective, genitive, noun. The formula sticks in the memory, and there are plenty of examples to establish it in the mind of one who relies on impressions. But it is not the usual order. The more common order is adjective, noun, genitive, with adjective, genitive, noun only a good second. At any rate, this is the case in Caesar (163 to 124), in the *De senectute* (28 to 13), and in Livy (87 to 35). In Cicero's speeches there are 61 of each. A bad third is the order genitive, adjective, noun, which occurs 14 times in Caesar and 8 times in Cicero's speeches. As should be expected, it occurs chiefly when the genitive is a relative, an interrogative, or a demonstrative referring to something in the preceding sentence. The order genitive, noun, adjective, which reverses the usual position of both modifiers, seems to occur but once in Caesar and twice in Cicero's speeches.

Another misleading statement is to the effect that a monosyllabic preposition often stands between an adjective or pronoun and its noun. The statement is true, since "often" is an elastic word; but why make it without adding that another order is more than five times as common? I am sure that many a student gets the wrong impression. In Caesar there are 836 phrases consisting of a monosyllabic preposition, an adjective or a pronoun, and a noun. Of these, 118, or about one in seven, have the order adjective, preposition, noun; while 624, or more than five in seven, have the order preposition, adjective, noun; and 94 have the order preposition, noun, adjective. In Cicero's speeches the order adjective, preposition, noun occurs only 39 times to 319 of the others, or about one time in nine. Because dissyllabic prepositions also sometimes stand between the adjective and the noun Miss Spilman counted the combinations with all prepositions, finding 6 to 89 in the *De senectute*, 3 to 124 in Livy xxi, 6 to 51 in the *Captives*. The facts are that the usage is confined very largely to the four prepositions *cum*, *de*, *ex*, and *in*; that even with them it occurs less than half the time; that only relatives and interrogatives commonly precede the preposition; and that virtually the only

other adjectives which precede are demonstratives, *alius*, *alter*, *ullus*, and *nullus*, the smaller cardinals, and a few common adjectives of quantity, chiefly *magnus*, *omnis*, and *reliquus*. The only times when one should encourage writing the order adjective, preposition, noun are: first, when the adjective is a relative or interrogative; and secondly, in a few common phrases like *magno cum periculo, his de causis*, and *altera ex parte*.

Miss Merryman did not make a complete study of the effect of emphasis on the position of the adjective, but she did note many instances of the emphatic adjective following its noun. When a serious study of word-order is made I venture the prediction that it will dispose of the notion that the adjective is put first for emphasis. That notion seems to be an offshoot of the untenable theory that all Latin sentences are toboggan slides—a notion possibly supported by a count of emphatic adjectives which shows that the majority precede. That may well be the case without proving anything. Since about four out of five of Caesar's adjectives precede, it would be strange if the majority of his emphatic adjectives did not. But how can anyone maintain that an adjective can be made emphatic by being put in its usual place? My guess is that a larger proportion of following adjectives are emphatic than of preceding.

In this detail, as elsewhere, we have been thinking too much about emphasis. Other factors enter into the problem. One need not go beyond the first sentence in the first speech against Catiline to see that the rhythmical clausulae must be taken into account. Why did Cicero write *patientiā nostrā* instead of *nostrā patientiā*? Not, I feel sure, because *nostrā* is unemphatic, but because *patientiā nostrā* gave him a favorite clausula. If the same words had been nominative he would not have used *patientiā nostrā* at the end of his sentence, whatever else he might have done, because that would have given him the abhorred heroic clausula.

## II. THE INCLOSING ORDER OF SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

I believe that no grammar clearly and definitely states the fact that subordinate clauses usually begin with the connective and close with the verb, the connective and verb thus serving the

purpose of commas or parentheses. Some of them do make a similar but untrue statement about phrases. They do commonly say that the connective usually stands first, and no doubt their authors feel that they have sufficiently covered the position of the verb by saying that it usually stands at the end of both clauses and sentences. Either they have not noticed or they do not think it worth saying that the verb is very much more likely to stand at the end of a clause than of a sentence.

Apparently this inclosing order of subordinate clauses was needed for clearness in the absence of punctuation. I therefore suggested to Miss Florence Hale, as her Master's thesis, that she find out to what extent some of the Latin writers employed it and consider the reasons for such exceptions as she might find. She read Books i and ii of Caesar's *Gallic War*, the first two speeches against Catiline, and the *De senectute*, and she got much more out of the subject than I can state here. Her chief results are given in Table II. In Caesar she found less than 16 per cent of exceptions, in Cicero's speeches less than 19 per cent, but in the *De senectute* more than 37 per cent. I must admit that the percentage of exceptions is large, especially in the *De senectute*. Even so the rule works better than some of those laid down in the grammars. But a further examination of the facts will show that by providing for the exception of two classes of clauses we can make the rule work much better.

Let us examine first the exceptions at the beginning of clauses; i.e., the instances in which one or more words of the clause precede the connective. The table shows that most of these exceptions occur in subordinate clauses which stand first in the sentence. Of other clauses less than one in fifty is an exception; but of initial clauses, by Miss Hale's count, nearly one-half are exceptions. Therefore in laying down the general rule we must add that exceptions are very frequent at the beginning of sentences.

Why this difference? In the first place Miss Hale herself believes that she counted too many exceptions. In *Caesar cum pervenisset castra posuit*, Caesar is the common subject of *pervenisset* and *posuit*. If we call it, with some grammars, the subject of *pervenisset*, the clause *Caesar cum pervenisset* is an exception;

but if, with other grammars, we call it the subject of *posuit*, the clause *cum pervenisset* is not an exception. Miss Hale counted all such cases as exceptions to avoid the suspicion of making out

TABLE II\*

## INCLOSING ORDER OF SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

	Total of Subordinate Clauses	Total of Exceptions	Per- centage
Caesar, <i>B.G.</i> i and ii.....	812	126	15.5
Cicero, <i>Cat.</i> i and ii.....	413	78	18.8
Cicero, <i>De sen.</i> .....	430	161	37.4

## EXCEPTIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF CLAUSES

	Total of Initial Clauses	Exceptions in Initial Clauses	Per- centage	Total of Other Clauses	Exceptions in Other Clauses	Per- centage
Caesar.....	153	66	43.1	659	13	2.0
Cic. <i>Cat.</i> .....	77	36	46.7	336	1	0.3
<i>De sen.</i> .....	59	32	54.2	371	12	3.2

EXCEPTIONS AT THE END OF CLAUSES, WITH CORRESPONDING DATA FOR  
MAIN CLAUSES FOR COMPARISON

	Total of Subordinate Clauses	Verb Not at End	Per- centage	Total of Main Clauses	Verb Not at End	Per- centage
Caesar.....	812	50	6.1	496	73	14.7
Cic. <i>Cat.</i> .....	413	42	10.1	445	146	32.8
<i>De sen.</i> .....	430	123	28.6	557	267	47.9

## EXCEPTIONS IN CLAUSES WHOSE VERB IS "SUM"

	Total of Subordinate Clauses	Verb Not at End	Per- centage	Total of Main Clauses	Verb Not at End	Per- centage
Caesar.....	48	18	37.5	28	26	92.8
Cic. <i>Cat.</i> .....	29	19	65.5	33	26	78.7
<i>De sen.</i> .....	82	31	37.8	88	59	67.0

## EXCEPTIONS AT THE END OF CLAUSES WHOSE VERB IS NOT "SUM"

	Total of Subordinate Clauses	Verb Not at End	Per- centage	Total of Main Clauses	Verb Not at End	Per- centage
Caesar.....	764	32	4.2	468	47	10.0
Cic. <i>Cat.</i> .....	384	23	6.0	412	120	29.1
<i>De sen.</i> .....	348	92	26.5	469	208	44.3

\* This table supports the rule that subordinate clauses (not including infinitive clauses) begin with the connective and close with the verb.

too good a case for the rule. If such clauses had not been so counted the percentage of exceptions would have been reduced materially.

But even then there would have been many more exceptions at the beginning of initial clauses than elsewhere. The reason for this is that the principles which ordinarily govern the choice of the first word in the sentence have their usual effect. To demonstrate this I should have to discuss each sentence in turn. I must content myself with saying that in Caesar the words which precede the connective are chiefly linking words and words introducing a new topic, with an occasional merely emphatic word; and in Cicero they are chiefly linking, emphatic, and contrasting words.

A statement which is very commonly made would explain many of these exceptions if it were true; but it is not. In its simplest form, and the only form that has any semblance of truth, it is that when the subordinate clause stands first and has the same subject as the main clause this common subject stands first, followed by the subordinate clause. *Caesar cum pervenisset castra posuit* is an example. Sometimes this statement is amplified and we are told that a common object, or a common syntactical factor, or a common element of thought stands first. Still worse, some of these statements assert or imply that the presence of a common factor has some influence in causing the subordinate clause to precede the main clause. For example, my favorite college manual of composition makes this most unfortunate statement: "When the same person or thing is referred to in both the main and the subordinate clause, this subject of discourse should be placed first, with the subordinate clause immediately following." Now in the first place the presence of a common factor has no effect whatever on the position of the subordinate clause. That clause stands where the thought makes it stand. In the second place, even when the subordinate clause stands before the main clause, a common subject is the only common factor which stands first in the majority of examples. In the third place, even a common subject never stands first because it is a common subject; common subjects and other common factors stand first only when other words would stand first. In the Latin studied by Miss Hale a common subject stands first 73 times, but it stands within one of the clauses 84 times. A common object stands first 6 times, but within one of the

clauses 10 times. No other common factor comes as near following the supposed rule. If one takes into account only sentences in which the subordinate clauses precede the main clauses, 73 common subjects stand first, while only 31 stand within one of the clauses; and this proportion may be held to substantiate the rule. Of common objects 6 stand first, but 8 stand within one of the clauses. I cannot take space to substantiate my third statement that when a common subject does stand first it does so in obedience to the usual principles of word-order; but it is based on an examination of all the examples. It must be remembered that many words which are not common factors precede the connective at the beginning of sentences. Miss Hale and I agree that the common factors and the other words stand first for precisely the same reasons. If this is true, then even the statement that when the subordinate clause precedes the common subject stands first, though true in a majority of sentences, is, not merely unnecessary, but misleading, because it gives the impression that another special principle of word-order comes into play in such sentences.

There remain for consideration the clauses in which the verb does not stand at the end. As this is the half of the rule which the grammars, so far as I have noticed, do not state, it must first be shown that the verb does in fact more often stand at the end of subordinate clauses than of simple sentences and main clauses. The third set of figures in Table II shows that the verb fails to stand at the end of a main clause about two and a half times oftener in Caesar, more than three times in Cicero's speeches, and one and two thirds times in the *De senectute*.

The verb *sum* is a recognized exception to the general rule that verbs more often stand at the end. The fourth set of figures in Table II shows two things: that the position of *sum* is affected by the general principle of which I am speaking, and that a large proportion of the exceptions to the principle are in clauses whose verb is *sum*. The figures are for *sum* alone, not including the instances of its use in compound tenses. It will be seen that *sum* fails to stand at the end in main clauses nearly twice as often as in subordinate clauses. This shows the working of the principle. Yet there is a total of 68 exceptions in subordinate clauses. This

shows that in laying down the general rule we must add that the verb *sum* frequently fails to stand at the end of subordinate clauses.

The final set of figures in Table II shows how the rule works when we omit clauses whose verb is *sum*. A rule of word-order with only 4.2 per cent of exceptions in Caesar and 6 per cent in Cicero's speeches is remarkably accurate.

I could give reasons for some of those exceptions, but not for all. Sometimes the antecedent of a relative is put after the verb for closer linking. No doubt emphasis occasionally plays a part. I feel quite sure that in a few of Cicero's exceptions the rhythmical clausulae are the cause. I do not know why the *De senectute* yields so many exceptions, nor do I know what the study of other authors may show. But I think that the teacher of Caesar and Cicero may teach the inclosing order of subordinate clauses as a help in both the reading and the writing of Latin. And I think it may be taught as the least violated of all general principles of word-order, excepting only the beginning of initial clauses and the end of *sum* clauses.